

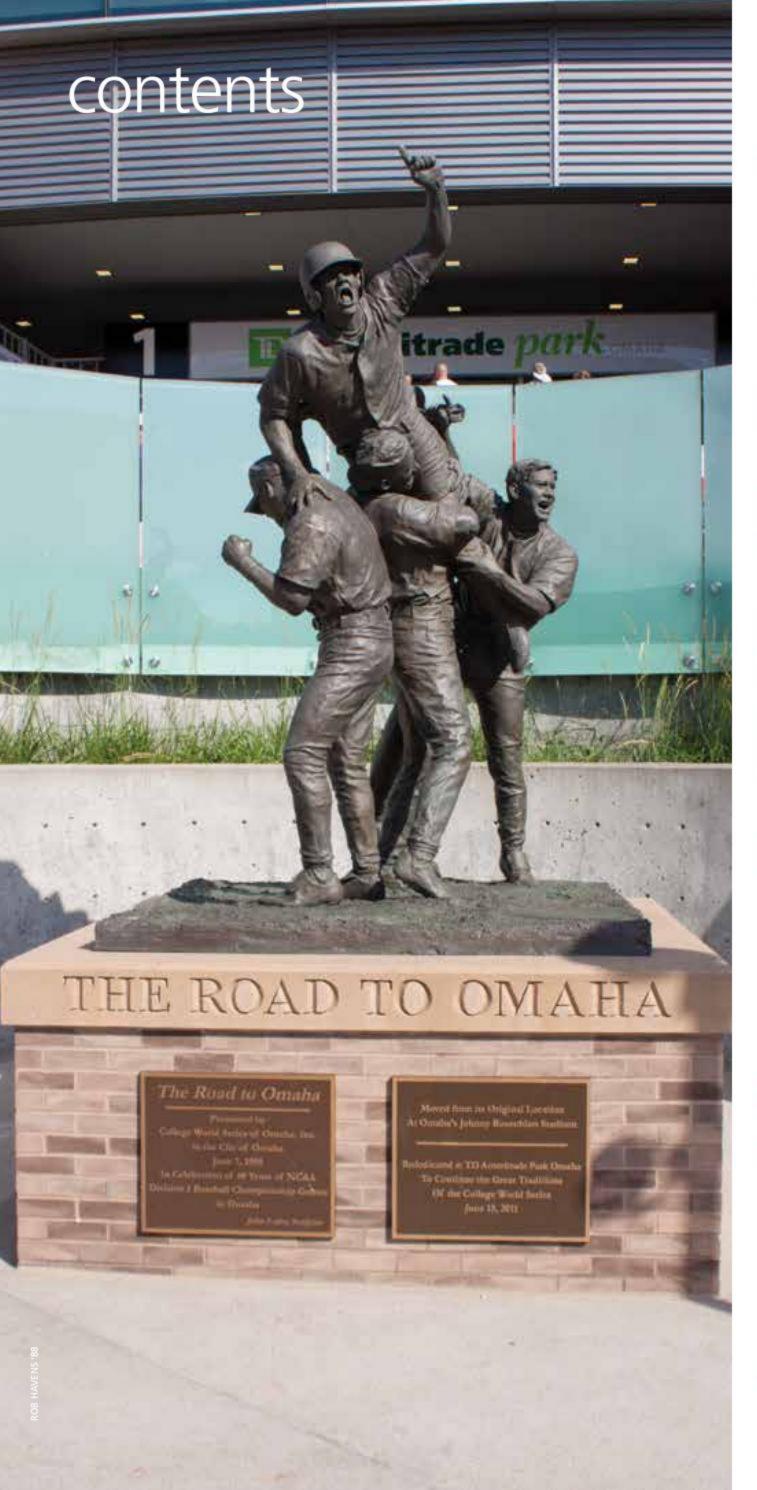




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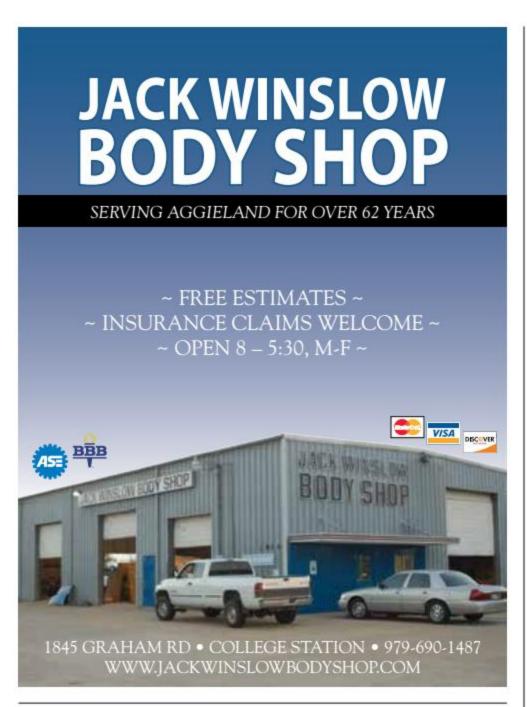
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**On the Cover**: Kaylor Chafin celebrates after shutting down the Davidson Wildcats in the 8th inning of game 2 in the Super Regional.





# Howdy Ags!

In my publisher's note back in February I wrote about my love for Aggie baseball and how much I enjoyed going to Omaha with my family six years ago. I wished Coach Childress and the team luck and mentioned how nice it would be for another trip to Omaha this year. Well, sometimes in life your wishes come true.

I had such a blast covering the team this year through the post season. The Regional in Houston was simply amazing as the Aggies beat all three teams in the tournament. There were some anxious moments, but all three games were great because different guys on the team stepped up to help us win. I hope you enjoy the recap of the season inside this issue.

Covering the Super Regional at home was incredible. A 15-inning walk-off win followed by an epic comeback game with a trip to Omaha on the line. Watching our guys dog pile on Olsen Field will never get old. Those are the moments you remember 20 years from now.

For those of you that have never gone to the College World Series, I highly recommend you do. Both of my trips to Omaha have been amazing. There is nothing like watching the maroon and white on college baseball's biggest stage.

Congratulations to Coach Evans and our Aggie Softball team for reaching the summit of the college softball world. Our ladies showed heart and determination through out the post season. Almost the whole team is back next year with a whole other year's experience under their belt.

Our men's track team was extremely close to winning the team outdoor title. The bar is so high for these guys but a number two finish is an incredible feat.

Our football team is grinding through summer workouts and our next issue will preview the season ahead. The work they are doing now will pay big dividends this fall.

Last but not least, please enjoy reading about our Aggieland Illustrated Sportsperson of the Year in this issue. Enjoy the rest of your summer and we will see you in Pasadena!

Gig'em Ags!







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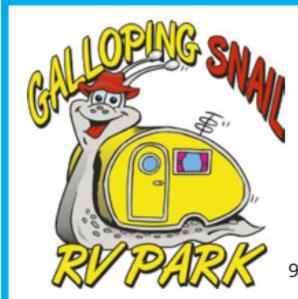




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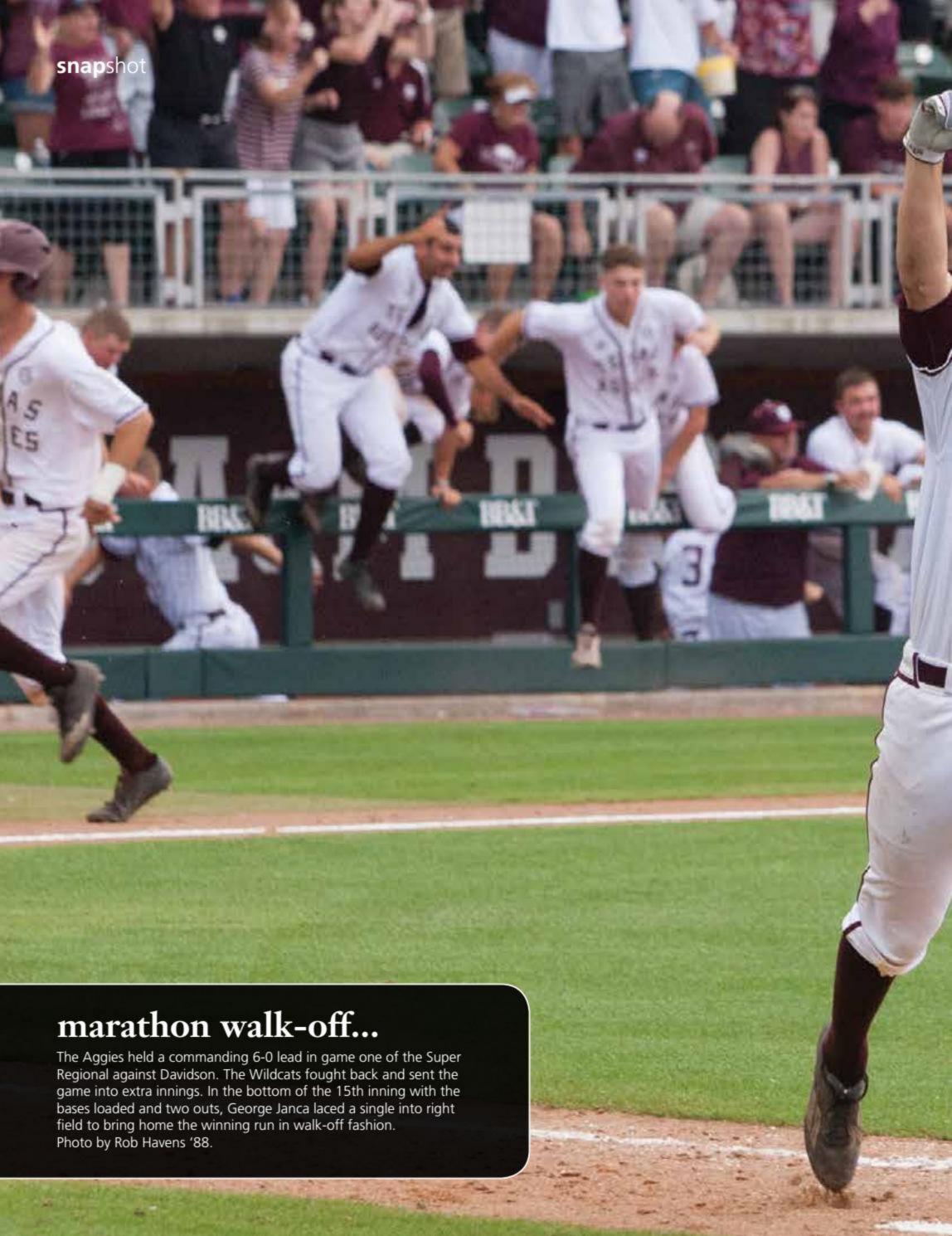
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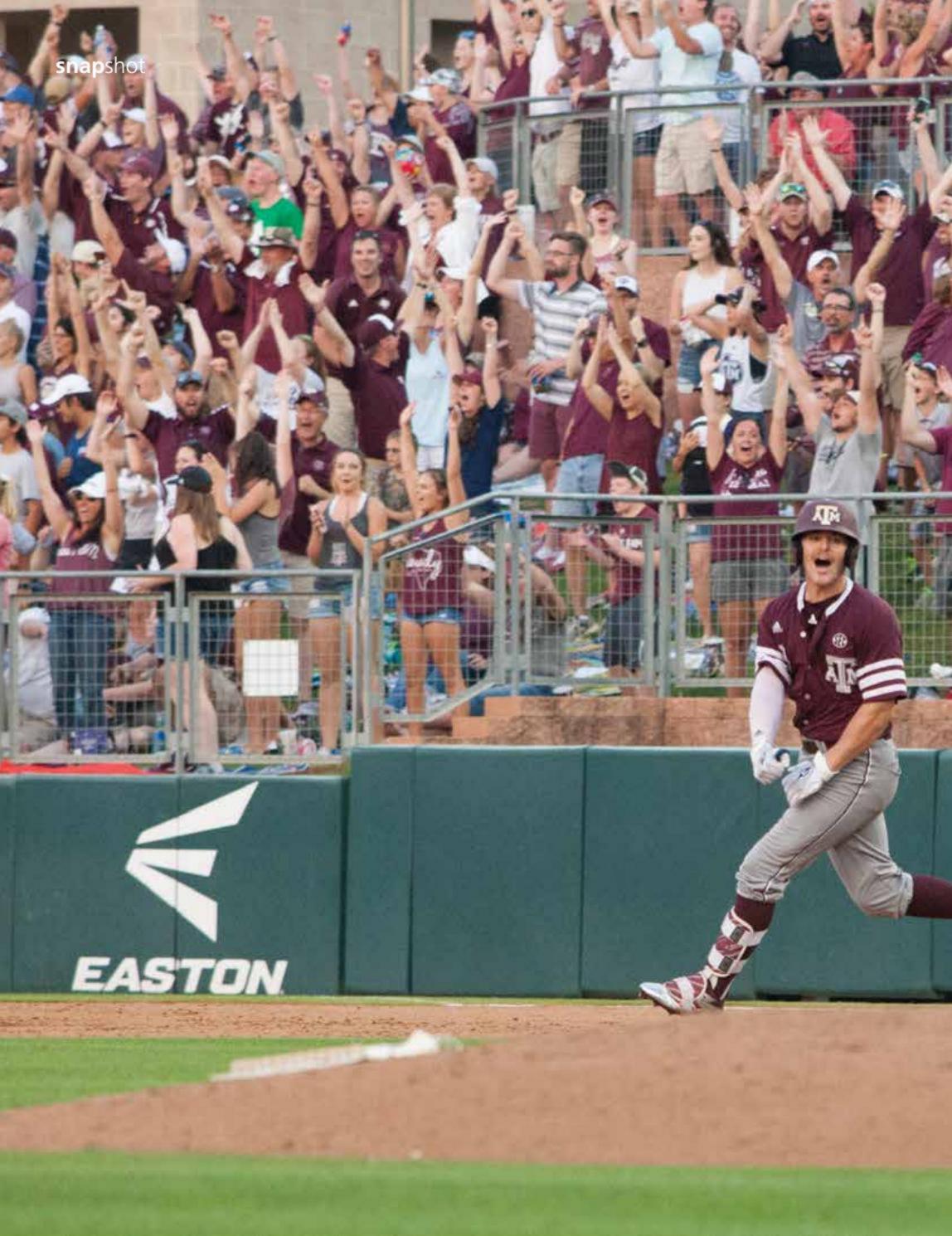
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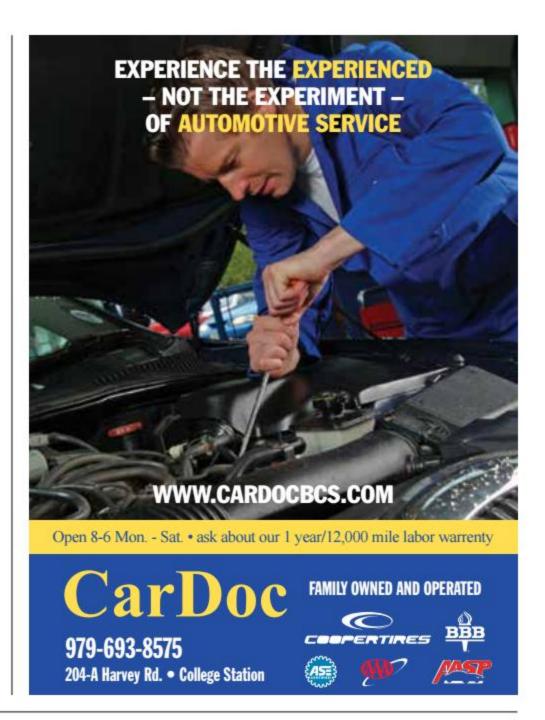
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[men's track & field] The Aggies were within two points of another outdoor team title but came up just short, earning second place in the NCAA Championships. Fred Kerley completed his sweep of NCAA titles in the 400m, becoming only the third Aggie to win the outdoor title. Lindon Victor defended his NCAA decathlon title scoring 8,390 points.

[men's golf] Cameron Champ made big waves in the first round of the U.S. Open by firing a two-under 70. The score placed him in a tie for 12th place after the opening round. He did one better the next day carding a -3, which was good enough for an eighth place tie. Champ was one of only two amateurs to make the cut. The talented junior wound up finishing the tourney in 35th but topped all players in driving distance at 334.4 yards per drive compared to the 302.2 average of the entire field



**[women's track & field]** The team finished in a four-way tie for 13th place at the NCAA Championships. Aaliyah Brown scored seven points for the team by placing seventh in the 100m and fourth in the 200m.



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# A VISIT TO OMAHA'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL PUTS THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

BY ROB HAVENS '88

If you ask any member on the Aggie baseball team what their goal is for the season, you're likely to get a one-word answer, "Omaha". It is the desired destination of every college baseball player and coach. But for Texas A&M, their trip to Omaha became more than just competing on the field, it was a chance to touch lives and make a difference in the Nebraska community.

Just a day after losing their first game in the College World Series, the Aggies took time to visit the Children's Hospital of Omaha. The team went to different floors, visiting over 100 kids. The media was fortunate to follow Corbin Martin, Kaylor Chafin, Braden Shewmake, Cole Bedford, Joel Davis, Cason Sherrod and Coach Childress as they went from room to room to meet the kids and their families.

A lot of the kids weren't baseball fans, but the Aggies were able to find common ground generating smiles and laughs over video games and players mustaches. Watching the reactions of the families and nurses as the kid's faces lit up and laughs filled the rooms was quite a sight to see.

The players signed baseballs and posters and gave them to the kids who were so excited to receive visitors. Coach Bolt talked about the reason for the visit, "One of the key elements of our program is selfless service, stepping outside ourselves. When you get in a season, a lot of times you kind of get lost in it. Baseball becomes the center of things, when it really shouldn't be so to do something like this here in Omaha. You know, we lost a baseball game yesterday but we realize there's a much

bigger purpose out there."

When the team entered the hospital they were greeted by a family of Aggies from Lincoln who's baby girl is a patient at the Children's Hospital. Mom and Dad were decked out in maroon and white, but their daughter stole the show as the precious baby donned a beautiful maroon bow with a 12th Man towel and Aggie License plate with OMAHA on it decorating her stroller.

Although there are still quite a few Childress fans in Omaha from his days as a Husker coach, I think this visit from the team has generated some lifelong Aggie fans from the patients and their families that got a special visit from the Texas A&M baseball team. The kids will be rooting for the Aggies and the players will be rooting for these kids.







It's that time again when we crown Aggieland Illustrated's Sportsperson of the Year award. It's always a difficult task because we are blessed to have so many great athletes at Texas A&M. This year's recipient came to A&M with lots of expectations. He was considered by many to be the best high school athlete in the nation. Over the three years we were lucky enough to watch him play, he never failed to make us proud. The 2017 AI Sportsperson of the Year is Myles Garrett.

His accolades on the field are well documented and because he was selected with the first pick in the NFL Draft, it's pretty clear he is the best. His chiseled frame and amazing strength coupled with his great speed make Myles a rare specimen amongst the best players in college football.

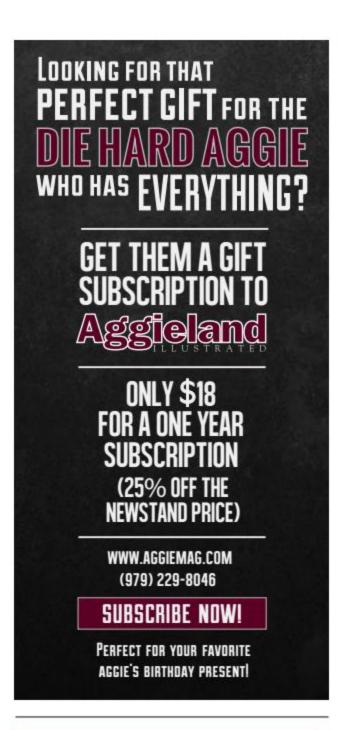
For three years we got to see what he could do on the field. One thing that we all got to see, that didn't show up on the stat sheet, was his heart and his love for Texas A&M. During this season he sustained a pretty serious injury that would have sidelined most players, especially those looking to protect their top-ten selection status in the draft.

In fact, several players in his same situation decided to sit the bench and not risk the millions of dollars that they potentially could make. That's what makes Myles so different. There was no way he was going to sit the bench and let his brothers fight without him, even if that meant playing at 75 percent and risking his future draft status.

Even while playing hurt, Myles would get doubled and triple teamed at times and players would hold him and cut him on a consistent basis. The coaches tried to only let him play third downs, but when the game was on the line he was not coming out.

Myles blew away the scouts at the NFL Combine showing his great strength and athleticism. But there is one thing they can't measure, and that is his heart. The Browns not only drafted the best player but they also drafted the guy with the biggest heart.

Aggieland Illustrated is proud to award Myles Garret our Sportsperson of the Year title. He will make us proud as he plays the next level and he will also continue to be a great spokesperson for our great university.





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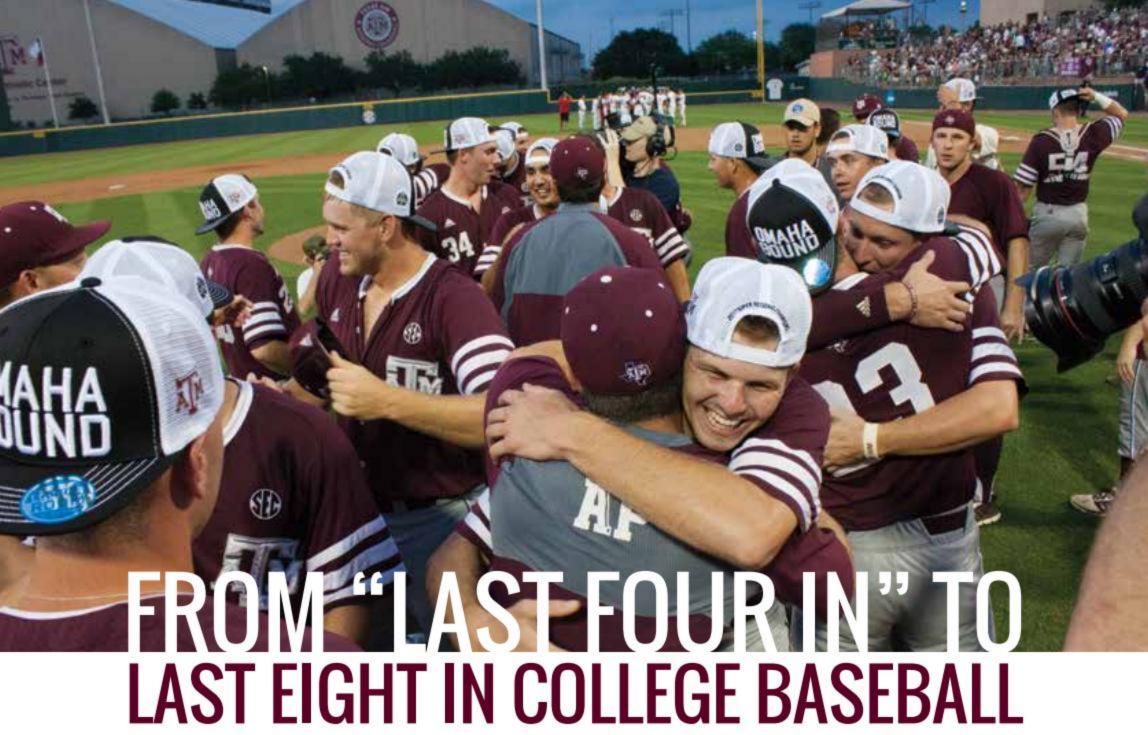
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BY ROB HAVENS '88

The 2017 baseball season will go down as one of the biggest roller coaster rides in program history. The young team that had to replace pretty much the entire infield from last year, grew up fast and gave Aggie fans the ride of their life. From a 0-5 start in conference play to the ultimate destination for college baseball teams, this squad created memories that we won't soon forget in Aggieland.

The season began in typical fashion with the Aggies going 14-4 in their non-conference schedule but a visit from Kentucky to start SEC play left the Aggies with a 0-3 record. The Ags would go on to lose two more to Vandy before a "players-only meeting" stopped the skid and got the squad back on the winning track

A trip to Baton Rouge might have been the turning point for this team as they took two out of three from the then #6 Tigers, including a dramatic ninth inning where the Aggies came from behind to score four runs, thanks to the big bat of Walker Pennington.

The Aggies would have a blistering 14-3 record in April against the teams in the toughest conference in the nation.

Texas A&M was looking forward to hosting another Regional and a second SEC Championship. Unfortunately, a tough May schedule saw the Aggies lose three series and go 3-7 in their last ten regular season games.

It still seemed like an afterthought that the Aggies would receive an at large bid into the tournament, until the final weekend of play in college baseball when bubbles were popped, upsets filled the weekend, and the Aggies were on the fringe of not making the tourney.

The team gathered around the TV awaiting their fate and when Auburn punched their ticket it looked unlikely that the Aggies would receive an invite. When the Houston Regional was announced, the team erupted into a huge celebration as the Aggies earned a three seed in the Regional. The committee would later inform the public that the Aggies were one of the last four in the tournament.

The Houston Regional was one of the toughest regionals in the country. The Aggies faced Baylor in game one, which was the second time of the year for the team to play their former conference foe. The Bears had won with a grand slam in

the ninth inning of the Shriners Hospitals For Children College Classic. The Aggies were anxious to avenge the loss and did with an 8-5 come from behind win.

Next the Aggies took on Big Ten Conference Tournament winner, the lowa Hawkeyes, to advance to the championship game. In one of the most exciting games of the year, the Aggies used a stellar performance on the mound by Corbin Martin and a three-run homer by Cole Bedford to beat lowa. Cason Sherrod and Kaylor Chafin closed the door with huge stops out of the bullpen.

After losing a day to weather, the Aggies got a career best outing by Stephen Kolek against Houston, who threw 8.1 innings to put the team in a position to win. But the Cougars battled back and looked to tie the game in the ninth before Cason Sherrod slammed the door giving the Aggies a Regional Championship.

As the Ags were taking care of business in Houston, Davidson was shocking the college baseball world by taking out national #2 seed North Carolina in Chapel Hill. The upset sent shockwaves through the country and opened the

door for the Aggies to once again host the Super Regional in College Station.

In the super, the Aggies jumped out to a 6-0 lead and it looked like smooth sailing for the team, but the scrappy team from Carolina would not go away. They chipped away before tying the game in the ninth inning at six apiece. In what has become the norm for the Aggies in Super Regional play, the teams battled into the 15th inning when George Janca singled in a game winning RBI with the bases loaded to beat the Wildcats.

As game two rolled along, it looked like a third and deciding game would be necessary as the Ags trailed in the eighth inning by a score of 6-2. The Aggie bats finally got hot and the team had some luck with a dropped pop fly by the Wildcats that resulted in the go-ahead run. The Aggies went on to win 12-6 and dog piled on Olsen Field.

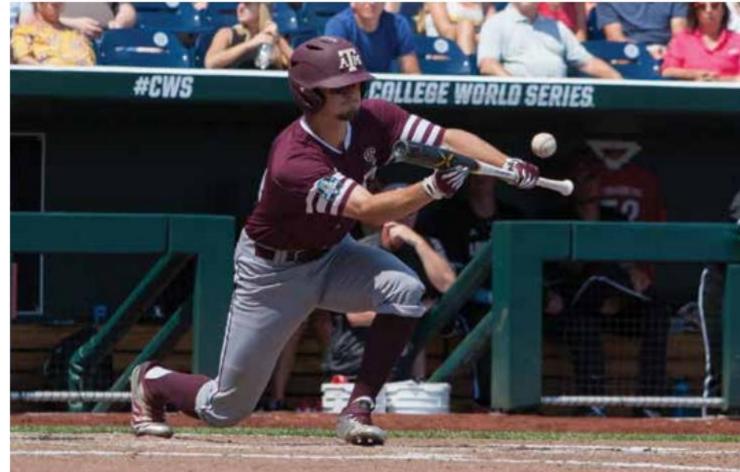
The team earned the program's sixth trip to Omaha based on sheer determination, heart and hard work. The obstacles they encountered along the way brought them closer together as a family. What seemed like an impossible feat became reality as the squad showed the spirit we brag so much about as Aggies.

The team faced Louisville in the first game of the College World Series. The Cards had the national player of the year, Brendan McKay. The Cardinals jumped out to a 5-0 lead in the second but the Ags battled back, scoring four and making it a game. But UL extended the lead to 8-4 and the Aggies were unable to answer.

In game two, the team faced their arch nemesis in TCU. Stephen Kolek, who had only pitched once in 31 days struggled early and the Frogs scored four runs. Kaylor Chafin came in as relief and pitched an amazing 5.1 innings giving up only three hits. The Aggie bats never got going and settled for only one run.

The team had an amazing run. It is one of the most difficult things in sport to get to Omaha and be one of the last eight teams standing. The team returned to College Station and within a couple of days received great news that drafted players Cason Sherrod and Kaylor Chafin had decided to come back for another year. We are so proud of Coach Childress and this young team and we look forward to many more trips to Omaha in the future for Aggie Baseball.







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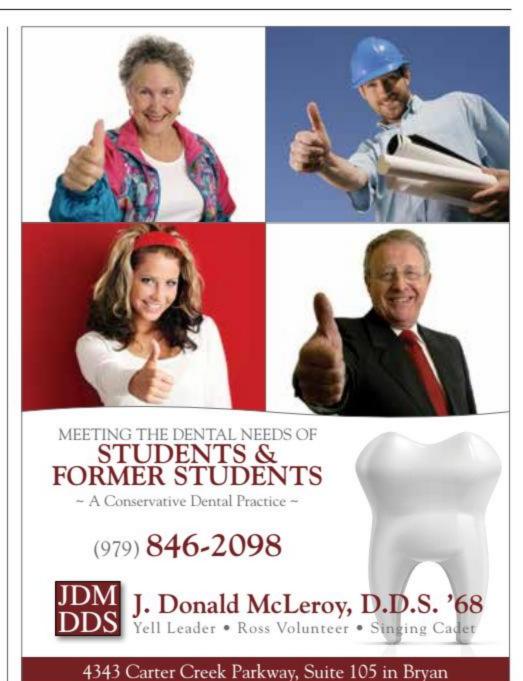
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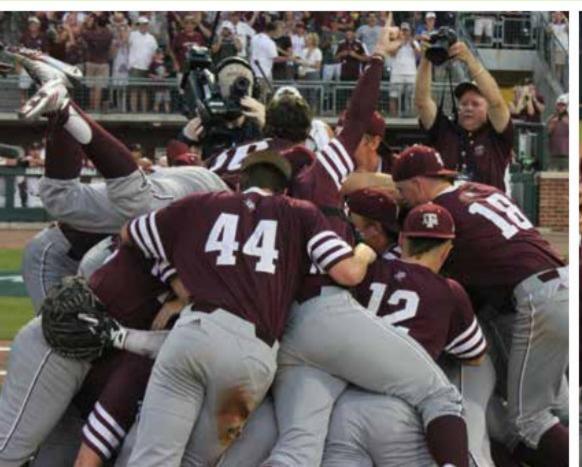










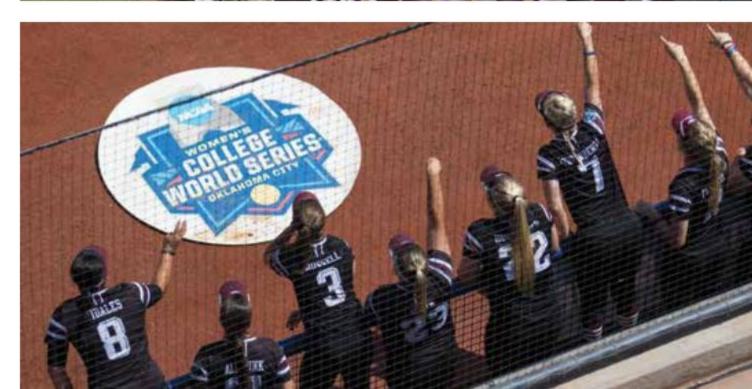






The Texas A&M Softball team went 47-13 during the 2017 season. Coach Evans returned almost everyone from last year's squad and the team dominated for most of the season, consistently being ranked in the top ten. The team earned a Regional on their home field and swept the series including a 3-1 victory over rival Texas in the championship game. The Ags travelled to Knoxville for the Super Regional and took down one of the nation's best pitchers on her home field, winning the last two games and earning a well-deserved trip to the Women's College World Series. After losing her father the week of Regional play, Trinity Harrington returned and pitched the game of her life to beat the Volunteers. The squad took on #1 seed Florida Gators in game one and faced the national player of the year in the circle. The Ags fell 8-0 in the first game setting up an elimination contest with #5 seed UCLA. The team battled hard but came up short 8-2 in the final game of the year. This was the Aggies 8th appearance at the WCWS. We are so proud of Coach Evans and her team, which return almost everybody to compete next year.





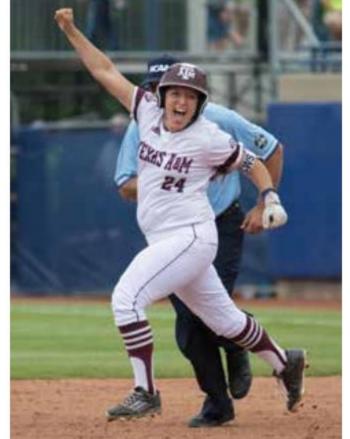
















### When did you start playing softball?

I started playing softball when I was five. Well, I played t-ball at four and then moved to softball when I was five.

# Did you play other sports growing up?

I did. When I started playing t-ball I was also doing ballet at the same time, and then growing up I was really into basketball and in junior high and high school I played volleyball, basketball and softball.

# Tell me about your decision to come to A&M and how your recruiting process went.

Yeah, so I actually committed in September of my freshman year. So, I was barely in high school and hadn't even played a game in high school yet. At that point in time I was so young I wasn't really thinking about college. My parents didn't go here and were never really into college sports. This whole recruitment thing was almost a surprise. I actually came to a football game before my visit and I knew right then that if she offers this is where I want to be. This is where I am supposed to be. Luckily that first visit, she pulled me into her office and she offered me and I told her I needed a day to think about it and the next day I said yes. From that point on I was an Aggie.

# Talk about your time so far at A&M.

It's been really fun. The game is a lot different. College softball is so much different than your select ball and high school ball. I was really scared coming in that it was going to be the same thing that I've experienced the past ten years of select ball. But being here and the team itself, everybody has the same goal. Everybody is as good as you or better than you. It's competitive and fun at the same time. You just want more all of the time.

# Talk about the difference from last year to this year. As a pitching staff y'all have become a three-headed monster. Has that helped you not to have to grind out as many innings?

Right, having so many different tools. The team has me and Trin (Trinity Harrington) that throw hard. But Trin throws more down and I throw more up. We also have Lexi (Smith) that doesn't throw as hard as me, but has a good curve and a good rise. Then you throw Payton (McBride) into the mix, she's slower but she's really spinny and she just gives a completely different look and makes teams look absolutely stupid. Coach Dill has done an amazing job really talking to us about our strengths and giving us confidence to attack any batter that we see. It's nice to know that after I throw my game or if I have to throw a couple of innings in the next game, I don't have to do everything. We're all healthy; we're all able to dominate any team that we face.

### Do you feel fresher this year?

Oh, definitely. That's what we learned from last year since I hit and I do more in practice, we've had to find a good balance. Our training staff and Coach Evans and even Coach Glasco, they've really talked to me to keep my body fresher and since I haven't had to pitch as much my body is in better shape.

### Talk to me about the win over Texas to win the regional. Is the rivalry still there?

I knew there was a rivalry there; I have friends, close friends that are Aggie fans or Longhorn fans. I was honestly so surprised last year when we were in the same regional as them. I was just as shocked this year when I saw Texas in our regional. It's a cool feeling. Coach Evans did tell us before the game not to focus on the rivalry but its still there, you want to beat 'em, and we're playing on our home field with all of our fans in the stands. It was a really cool experience

but at the same time I felt really calm and confident that we were going to beat them. That was pretty cool.

### Talk about the celebration after the win.

Even though it was really cool, it was honestly something I wasn't expecting. I'm a very calm person, I went to go give Ashley a hug but then everyone crowded around this one thing. I thought it was the trophy; I was like, "heck yeah let's get at that trophy." I was in the back and couldn't see it (she was cell phone face timing Trinity) but then they started yelling, "Trin!!!" I was like, "oh my God, that's so cool!" I knew that it was going to happen; that we were going to face time her but I didn't know it was going to be on the field. So, that was really cool that even though she wasn't here she was still able to celebrate on the field with us and see everything that was going on afterwards it was a pretty special thing.

### Is the confidence level different

# this year with another year of experience under the team's belt?

Yeah, definitely. It's not something I tend to think about a lot I think we're just experienced and confident to go out there and play softball. Like we don't have to talk about it or focus on it. Since we all have it we're able to go out there and focus on one pitch at a time and all of our at-bats and stuff

### What's your favorite Aggie softball tradition?

I like doing our yell on the third baseline before every game. It was pretty cool to do that against Texas State during the regional. That has to intimidate them somewhat. Every team we face, just to see us all lined up on that line and do our yell that's pretty cool.

### What's your favorite Aggie Tradition?

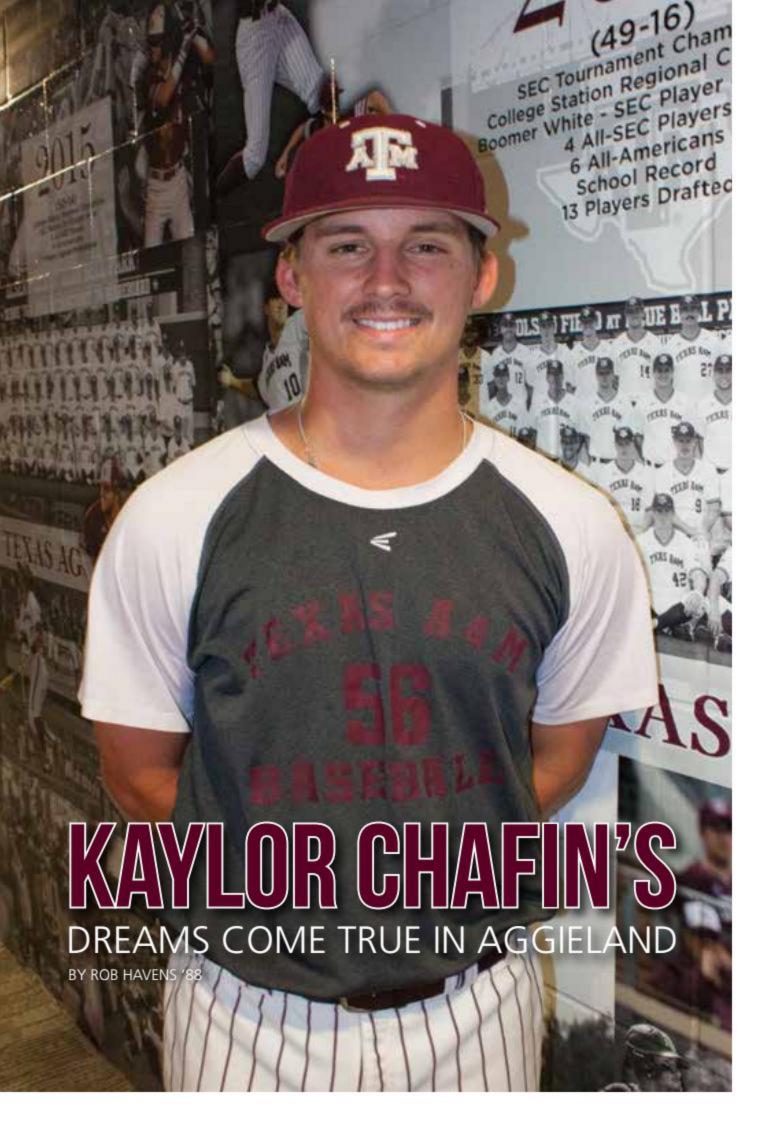
Hmmm... I like Midnight Yell. I don't get to it a lot because I'm not a big night

person. But when I have gone, just all the students together and so excited for the football game the next day. And to listen to the Yell Leaders tell their stories and all that. I think it's a pretty cool thing and not a lot of schools get to do that.

## Tell our readers something they may not know about you.

They may know this if they come to softball games, but I'm a big Britney Spears fan. That's why my walk-up song when I come out to pitch is a Britney Spears song. The story behind that is because when I was a little girl, I was so in love with Britney Spears that I walked up to my mom one day and said, "Mommy call me Britney!" That was before all the head shaving and all the craziness. Still to this day I'm a big Britney fan. It just gets everyone pumped up and it's a fun silly song to play softball to.





Robert Frost said in his famous poem "The Road Not Taken" that he took the one less traveled by, and it made all the difference. For Aggie Baseball pitcher Kaylor Chafin, the road to where he is now has not been the typical path but it has definitely made all of the difference for Texas A&M Baseball.

The talented kid from Sweeny High School always wanted to be an Aggie. His older brother attended A&M around the time Kaylor was eight. His family had season tickets to Aggie football games, so Texas A&M become the only place he wanted to be.

Growing up Kaylor was always at a baseball field. Even as a kid he watched his big brother, who was ten years older than him, playing on All-Star Teams. As soon as he was old enough, he followed in his brothers footsteps and played baseball. His dream was to one day play for the Aggies.

In 2013, Kaylor's dream came true as he became a Fightin' Texas Aggie.

He redshirted his first year and learned from Coach Childress doing bullpens and working on his craft. In his next year, the Aggies were stock piled with pitchers including AJ Minter, Matt Kent, Ty Schlottmann and Tyler Stubblefield, which would make it hard for him to get any playing time. So he decided to go to Blinn College and develop under Coach Harvey McIntyre.

Kaylor competed in 13 games for the Bucs, getting 11 starts and posting a 7-4 record. He returned to the team with great expectations but only got to pitch a total of four innings in eight games that year. It was a turning point for Chafin as his time was running out and he knew he had to get it together.

During the current campaign, Kaylor has been one of Coach Childress' most consistent pitchers out of the bullpen. At 5'11 180lbs. he's not a menacing presence on the bump, but his results remind us a lot of Matt Kent (Al's Sportsperson of the Year last season). "I've heard that a lot," Kaylor said when asked about the similarities.

His coming out party happened early in the year when he came into the game late versus national power TCU and pitched 6.1 innings in a heartbreaking loss. For the Aggies it was the low point of the season, but for Childress it was an eye opener of what Chafin could do.

So in game one of the Regional vs. Baylor, with the Aggies up 7-5 in the sixth and two Bears on base, Childress with confidence called Kaylor's number. He responded by going 3.2 innings of one hit baseball and saved the game.

In game two, Chafin repeated his heroics by inheriting a 2-0 count with two runners on base in a 3-2 game with two outs in the ninth, and got lowa's Big Ten Tournament Most Valuable Player Chris Whelan to pop out to first to clinch the victory.

In the championship game, Chafin again contributed in the final inning getting a fly-out and inducing a ground ball that could have ended the game. In our interview for this story, which took place before the Super Regional, I asked him what his mindset is when he comes into the game. "Just to attack the hitter," Chafin said. "You just have to go right at him. If you come in scared or come in trying to be timid, nibble at the corners, you're not going to have success. You've just got to trust yourself

and go right at 'em."

Chafin told me he is able to block out the crowd as he comes into the game in a hostile environment. Although he does have sympathy for opposing pitchers that come into Olsen and are subjected to the Ball Five tradition. I asked how he would feel if he was the visiting pitcher and Chafin replied, "Oh my gosh, I would never want to play here again... I don't know how I would handle that, because I already put enough pressure on myself. If I get to ball fourteen then I have 7,000 fans chanting that...I wouldn't like that."

When he has trouble on the mound and generates a visit from Coach Childress I asked him what the veteran coach tells him. "It depends, sometimes he gets into me a little bit to fire me up," Chafin said. "Other times it's more or less for me to take a deep breath, relax you're doing the right thing."

As Chafin prepared for the Super Regional I asked him what he thinks the difference is for this year's squad. "I think we realized that we may not be as talented as teams from the past in other people's eyes, when we start playing like a family that's when we play our best baseball," Chafin said. "So we started trusting each other, relying on each other and I feel like that has shown lately."

To wrap up our interview, I asked him what the perfect ending to the season would be. As it was always his dream to play baseball for the Aggies, I wanted to know if he saw himself on the mound for the final out. "In a perfect scenario, I'm on the mound, but perfect scenario is just holding that trophy," Chafin said. "As long as we are the ones holding that trophy in Omaha that's all I care about. I don't care if I don't throw at all, just hold the trophy, that's the perfect ending for me."

As Frost penned in his poem that he "took the road less traveled by" and what a difference it made, Chafin too also took a different path. He has blossomed into a difference-making pitcher for Texas A&M. Let's just hope the team can make all of his dreams come true if they make it to Omaha!







The talented defensive end became the first player in program history to be taken as the first pick. He was chosen by the Cleveland Browns and generated lots of free publicity for Texas A&M in the weeks leading up to the draft.



The team took us on an amazing ride after the committee admitted they were one of the last four teams in the tournament. They swept one of the toughest regionals in Houston and then swept Davidson in the Super Regional to advance to Omaha for only the sixth time in program history.



The team dominated most of the year but after sweeping the Regionals at home, found themselves trailing 1-0 in the Supers. Returning to the team after losing her father, Trinity Harrington pitched the game of her life to punch the Aggies ticket to the Women's College World Series.



The team won in dramatic fashion as the 4x400 squad came from behind in the final race of the meet to beat Florida by half a point. With 40m left in the race, Mylik Kerley made up a 5m deficit in front of a roaring crowd to clinch the victory.



Once again Coach Sumlin and his staff assembled a stellar class of exceptional athletes. Quarterback Kellen Mond and linebacker Anthony Hines III headline a class that meets needs across the board for Texas A&M. In addition, nine of the signees were on campus in the spring to get a jump-start on their Aggie careers.



The talented 6'9 forward broke onto the scene, opened eyes early in this season and got better as the year went along. Expected by many experts to be a lottery selection, he shocked fans by deciding another year at A&M would help him mature and further develop his game.

After the Allen/Murray fiasco, the Aggies needed someone who could lead the team and bring stability under center. Graduate transfer Knight was the perfect answer as he came in with a team first mentality and the maturity of a fifth year guy.

Texas A&M became the first team in the current format to win four meets in order to win the championship. The Ags dominated the field and wrapped up the title with a 11-5 victory over Georgia to bring home the hardware. Head coach Tana McKay said, "This team dug deep and that is exactly what they needed to do to win."

The team led from wire-to-wire leaving little doubt who the best team in the SEC was. The ladies blew away the competition, setting a school records for points earned. After the SEC Championships, they went on to compete and finish with a program best third place in the NCAA championships.

The 10th ranked squad battled against the 11th ranked Georgia Bulldogs to win a share of the championship. It was the second time in the last three seasons for the Aggies to win the title.

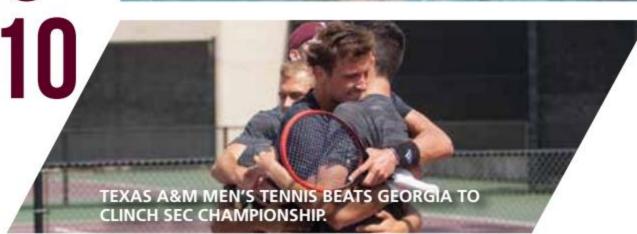
With one week left in the regular season, the hopes for a post-season bid looked dim. The Aggies won their last three games and earned an at large bid which continued a string of 22 straight post-season appearances. The team went on to beat TCU in the first round before losing in penalty kicks vs. #7 USC in round two.

In a season with ups and downs, the ladies finished strong and defeated ULM and Baylor to make it to the Sweet 16. The team beat #2 Georgia before the tournament to record the highest ranked victory in program history. The team lost to the eventual National Champion Florida in the third round of the NCAA tourney.













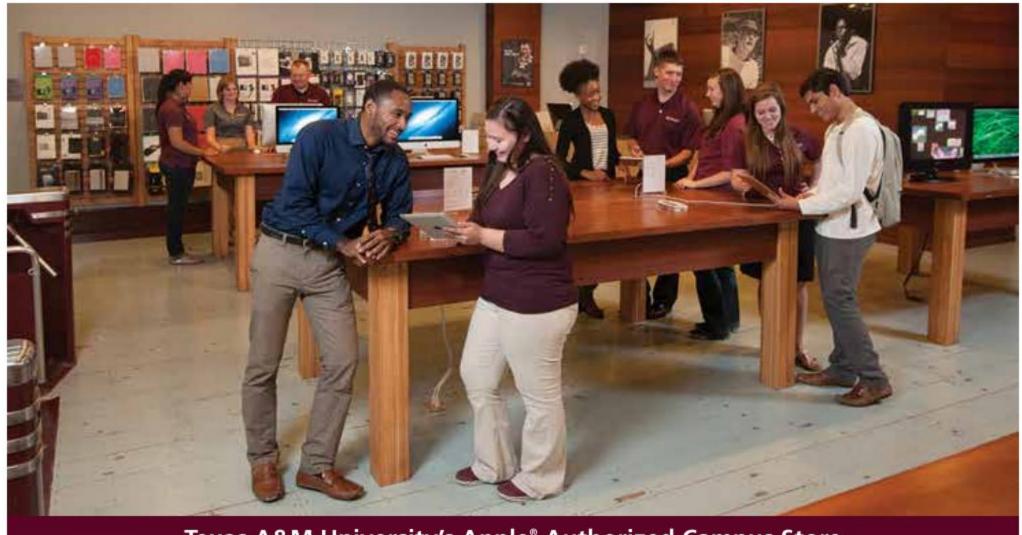












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